FIRST COMICS
AUG 62 1990
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MIKE BARON • STEVE BUTLER • RANDY CLARK
BADGER™

BADGER™

CREATED BY **MIKE BARON**

A self-styled crime fighter who rides the highways and by-ways of America, the **Badger** metes out bloody justice to jaywalkers, ticket scalpers, indifferent teenaged fast-food clerks — in fact, *any-damn-body he feels like because he's CRAZY!*

Badger is just one side of **Norbert Sykes**, a Vietnam veteran with a personality problem: it's split seven ways. Nevertheless, Norbert almost always finds himself in a Badger state of mind.

Badger is a master of Shorin-ryu and dozens of other obscure, esoteric, arcane, not to mention abstruse martial arts. He can also talk to the animals — just like Dr. Doolittle. Only with better results.

Badger lives with **Ham the Weather Wizard** in a castle south of Barneveld, Wisconsin. Ham and Badger met while both were inmates at a state mental hospital. Through cunning and chicanery, Ham has amassed a considerable fortune.

Badger calls everyone Larry.

Last Issue: Mavis and Ham called up the demon **RatFinque** to aid them in the rescue of Badger from the martial arts masters, the **Chisum Brothers**, and their master, the demon **Motorhead**. The battle was decided in a monster-hot-rods-from-hell showdown. Now, Badger has bought a new Corvette since the Chisums trashed the last one.

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ian TETRAULT COLORIST

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NORBERT, YOUR LATE FATHER, GOD REST HIS SOUL, PLAYED THE STOCK MARKET AND HE LOST HIS SHIRT.
MA, HE INVESTED IN FORD WHEN THEY PRODUCED THE EDSEL!
HOW DO YOU LIKE THE HANDLING?
WHAT HANDLING?
NORBERT, THERE'S SOMETHING VERY IMPORTANT I'VE BEEN MEANING TO DISCUSS WITH YOU...
SOCK IT TO ME. WAIT--HANG ON--HERE COME THE TWISTIES.
ZIP! ZAP! ZIP! ZOW!! STICKS LIKE A SLUG ON A GARBAGE SCOW!
OKAY, MA--SOCK IT TO ME.
MA?
SCREEEEEEE

PENDING AN AUTOPSY, I'D HAVE TO SAY MRS. SIKES DIED OF NATURAL CAUSES.
ALL RIGHT, THANK YOU VERY MUCH, SIR.
I'M A MEDICAL EXAMINER YOU DON'T HAVE TO TIP ME.
DOUBTLESS YOU HAVE A FAVORITE CHARITY.
HONORABLE HUSBAND, WOULD YOU LIKE ME TO HANDLE THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS?
MA ASKED TO USE THIS FUNERAL HOME. THEY GAVE HER A CAKE ON HER 65TH BIRTHDAY.
SHE SAID SHE WANTED TO BE CREMATED.
Valley Funeral Home
Serving the bereaved with and compassion since 1934
LeMar Schneider
FUNERAL DIRECTOR
PHONE:
(608) 555-7071
COME. WE HAVE TAKEN ROOMS NEARBY. THE FUNERAL IS TOMORROW.
SHE SAID SHE HAD SOMETHING TO TELL ME...
WHAT COULD IT HAVE BEEN?
HUSBAND SHOULD REMEMBER HONORABLE MOTHER, DID NOT ALWAYS MAKE SENSE.

HELLO, DAISY? IT'S MAVIS. HE SEEMS MOROSE, LISTLESS... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.
RELAX, YOU'RE DOING FINE. HOW'S HAM HOLDING UP?
WIZ1
HAM IS NONPLUSSED. HE'S HANDLING THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS, DAISY, IN SOME WAYS YOU KNOW BADGER BETTER THAN I...
NOPE. NOT ANY MORE. ALL I'D DO IS MUDDLE THE SOUP. YOU'RE DOING FINE. I HAVE TO HANG UP NOW--HAM IS ON THE OTHER LINE.
BELOVED BADGER, DAISY SAYS WE'RE ALL DOING FINE.
THAT'S GOOD.
DO YOU NEED ANYTHING?
NOPE.
SHE WAS A GOOD WOMAN. I'M GLAD I KNEW HER.
ME TOO.
NOW LET'S SLEEP.
ALL RIGHT.
WELL, MS. FIELDS? DID TRUMP FAX ME THAT CONTRACT LIKE HE PROMISED?
YES. WHAT ABOUT NORBERT? DO YOU WANT TO STAY FOR THE FUNERAL?
ABSOLUTELY NOT, MS. FIELDS! SOMEBODY HAS TO RUN THE SHIP OF STATE! I'D BE THERE RIGHT NOW IF YOU HADN'T INSISTED I ACCOMPANY MAVIS! I'LL BE BACK TOMORROW NIGHT--
--IN THE MEANTIME YOU HOLD TRUMP AT BAY!

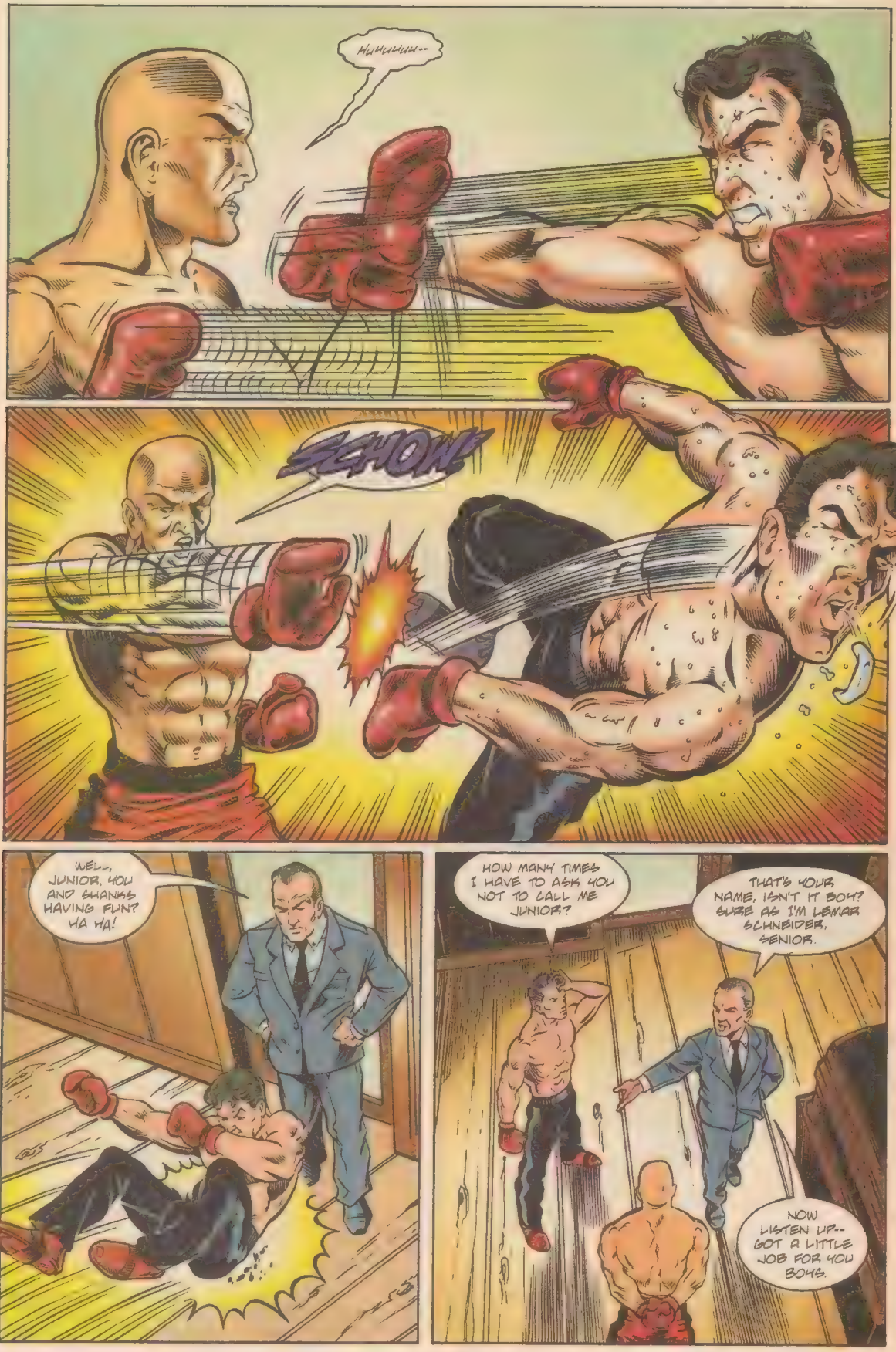
MR. AND MRS. SYKES? I'M LEMAR SCHNEIDER JR. I WANT TO EXTEND TO YOU MY DEEPEST CONDOLENCES.
THANKS.
VALLEY FUNERAL HOME
421
YOUR FRIEND MISTER THORNDYKE HAS TAKEN CARE OF ALL THE DETAILS. I UNDERSTAND YOUR MOTHER REQUESTED THAT THERE BE NO SERVICE..
SHE ASKED THAT WE REMEMBER HER AS SHE WAS, VIBRANT AND FULL OF LIFE.
WHAT WAS THAT?
AN OLD DRUID BLESSING TO SPEED HER ON HER WAY.
DAMN YOU, YOU STUPID FOOL! DIDN'T YOU HEAR HER SAY SHE DIDNT WANT A SERVICE?!

BAM BAM
WHOA! LET ME CATCH MY BREATH...
MAN, YOU'RE HITTING HARDER THAN EVER. I THOUGHT I WAS IN SHAPE.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, RILEY. FOUR MORE SIDEKICKS.
FOOMP
OKAY! THAT'S ENOUGH! WHY DON'T YOU JUMP ROPE NOW?
I DON'T JUMP ROPE SINCE I GOT BACK FROM GAZASTAN. I DON'T WANT TO END UP BACK THERE.
FWA-BADA FWA-BADA FWA-BADA
OKAY, MAN. LET'S PUT ON THESE HEAD PROTECTORS AND SPAR THREE MORE ROUNDS.
NO WAY, BADGER. I GOT ENOUGH LUMPS AND CONTUSIONS FROM THE LAST THREE ROUNDS.
YOU MIND TELLING ME WHAT YOU'RE GETTING IN SHAPE FOR?

I DON'T KNOW.. DAISY SAYS I'M ACTING OUT UNRESOLVED FEELINGS OF HOSTILITY TOWARDS MY MOTHER.
HEY MAN, THAT'S ONLY NATURAL. YOUR MOM DIDN'T TRY TO STOP YOUR STEPFATHER, SO YOU'RE ANGRY AT HER. IT WILL WORK ITSELF OUT.
I DON'T WANT ANY PSYCHOANALYSIS FROM YOU, RILEY.
BONG BONG
MAVIS!
HUMBLE WIFE IS COOKING. PLEASE TO ANSWER DOOR YOURSELF.
GYM
YES?
MISTER SIKES? I'M FROM THE SCHNEIDER FUNERAL HOME.
THESE ARE YOUR DEARLY DEPARTED'S REMAINS.
THANK YOU.
DON'T MENTION IT. I MUST RUN. I'VE GOT FIVE MORE URNS TO DELIVER.
BUSINESS MUST BE BRISK, MAVIS?
BUSINESS IS BOOMING.

HERE YOU GO, MA. WARM FOREVER.
YO! YOUR MISSUS WANTS US IN THE DINING ROOM.
MM-MMM. SOMETHING SURE SMELLS GOOD.
TRADITIONAL VIET-AMERICAN CUISINE.
MAVIS, I CAN'T BELIEVE YOU DID ALL THIS!
IS TRADITIONAL GROANING BOARD FOR BEREAVED FAMILY.
STAND BACK, LET AN EXPERT CHECK THIS OUT.
MA NEVER WAS A BIG EATER.
HAM! WE'RE EATING!
EAT, MADAME. I AM OTHERWISE ENGAGED.
ANOTHER PLAYER HAS ENTERED THE FIELD.
Tibetan Mystics gathering in Santa Barbara

OKAY SHANKS--SHOW ME THIS TIBETAN KUNG FU I'VE HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT.
IT IS CALLED BUDDHA'S PALM.
IT IS FOR YOUR OWN GOOD, LEMAR. TOO MUCH ARROGANCE POISONS THE BLOOD.
THUD
COME ON, SHANKS! AM I MOVING TOO FAST FOR YOU?
BAFF
NOT LIKE THAT SLOW MOTION STUFF YOU PRACTICE IN THE PARK, IS IT?
POW
I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU--YOU SURE CAN TAKE A PUNCH!


HUHHHHH--
SCHOK!
WELL, JUNIOR, YOU AND SHANKS HAVING FUN? HA HA!
HOW MANY TIMES I HAVE TO ASK YOU NOT TO CALL ME JUNIOR?
THAT'S YOUR NAME, ISN'T IT BOY? SURE AS I'M LEMAR SCHNEIDER, SENIOR.
NOW LISTEN UP-- GOT A LITTLE JOB FOR YOU BOYS.

APPARENTLY MRS. GRUNDY HAS DECLINED OUR BUY-OUT OFFER, BOYS. THE GRUNDY FUNERAL HOME REFUSES TO GO AWAY. I WANT YOU TO TRY REASONING WITH HER ONE MORE TIME.
WHY DO I NEED SHANKS? I CAN HANDLE MRS. GRUNDY AND HER POLACK NEPHEW.
THAT MAY BE TRUE JUNIOR, BUT I WANT SHANKS TO LEARN THE BUSINESS. WE'LL BE EXPANDING SOON AND SHANKS IS GOING TO TAKE OVER ONE OF OUR HOMES.
YOU BOYS DRESS NICE-- REMEMBER YOU REPRESENT THE VALLEY FUNERAL HOME.
COME ON SHANKS. I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO DRESS
MY FATHER REALLY SAVED YOUR FATHER'S LIFE?
YES, YOUR FATHER SAVED MY FATHER DURING FIREFIGHT IN VIETNAM. IT WAS THEIR WISH I TRAVEL TO AMERICA AND LEARN WESTERN FUNERAL BUSINESS.
AFTER WE TALK TO THE GRUNDY DAME, WE'LL SWING BY THE KILN.
WHAT IS THE KILN?
VALLEY FUNERAL HOME
MAN, THE KILN'S THE KEY TO OUR WHOLE OPERATION. I CAN'T DESCRIBE IT--YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT AND SEE.
THERE'S THE GRUNDY JOINT ON THE LEFT.

STATION IDENTIFICATION

Since the name attached to the bottom of this column will be unfamiliar to most, if not all, of you, it seems a few words of introduction are in order. At least that's what Bob Garcia says, although I suspect it's an all-too-transparent ploy on his part to get out of having to write something himself.

In any case, I won't bore you with too many details of my life because, quite frankly, it's not all that interesting. (I'd give it a 53: not much of a melody and you can't dance to it.) But on the theory that you should know something about the people behind the scenes, I'll try and give you an idea of what I look for in a comic book.

To begin with, I grew up in the 1950s in Tucson, Arizona. In those ancient days, before television became the center of the American home, my sisters and I got most of our entertainment from books. We read everything from the Oz stories of L. Frank Baum, to the excellent Landmark histories published by Random House, to just about anything that could be found in the children's section of the Tucson Public Library. And, of course, there were comic books.

The first title I can remember reading was *The Lone Ranger*. Those old Dell issues don't hold up well today, but to a four-year-old boy, the character was the main attraction. I was probably drawn to the Disney books for the same reason, but they held my interest far longer. And I was just the right age for the Silver Age revival of superheroes at DC, and the beginnings of the Marvel line, to excite my imagination.

Over 20,000 comic books later (talk about a misspent youth!) I got my first professional job in comics, editing the Gladstone Disney books. That was a real kick, since I still remember the old stories fondly, and the characters as defined by such masters as Carl Barks and Floyd Gottfredson still hold my interest. I like a *funny* funny-book.

But times change, and when it became clear that I would have to move on, I listened to my old pal, Mike McCormick, and contacted Bob Garcia about a job at First. It's up to Bob to tell you why he hired me — he's usually so level-headed — but I can tell you why, out of all the comic book publishers there are today, I was attracted to First.

It goes back to those 20,000 comics I mentioned above. Anyone who's read that many can tell you that after a while, the stories get awfully familiar. I was looking for something different, and that seems to me to be what First specializes in. From such early groundbreaking series as *American Flagg!* and *Mars*, to the incredible work John Ostrander and Flint Henry have been doing lately on *Grimjack*, this company definitely follows the beat of that proverbial different drummer. Even *Nexus* and *Badger*, which could easily have been done as straight superhero shtick, have been molded into something fresh.

> *I was looking for something different, and that seems to me to be what First specializes in.*

The books I've been assigned bear out what I'm talking about. *Lone Wolf and Cub* could be called an Eastern Western, but *The Lone Ranger* was never like this! What intrigues me, beyond the carefully staged samurai swordfights, is that Kazuo Koike and Goseki Kojima are successfully evoking an alien culture and era. I have no idea if they're any more accurate than the writers of our cowboy stories — can anyone out there recommend a good history of Japan? — but the "otherness" of the series fascinates me.

I also get to be the first reader of Eric Shanower's next *Oz* graphic novel — what memories that will bring back! — and I'm currently working with Joshua Quagmire on a very funny Betty Boop story that will be published in the prestige format later this year. Not exactly run-of-the-mill projects, huh?

In addition, Bob has promised to give me *Dreadstar* — space opera with a sense of humor — and we're working on a Christmas special and some interesting new series, one of which will be deadly serious. Bob will tell you about those later, but you can be sure they'll have the First difference that we've *all* come to expect.

— Byron Erickson

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I'M SORRY TO SPOIL YOUR WEEKEND, OLIVER. BUT I DARENT VENTURE OUT ALONE SINCE THOSE SCHNEIDERS TURNED MEAN.
S ALL RIGHT, AUNT GWEN. JUNIOR WAS THREE YEARS AHEAD OF ME AT VALLEY HIGH AND HE WAS ALWAYS A BULLY
Grundy
FUNERAL HOME
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT. LEMAR USED TO BE A GENTLEMAN...UNTIL HE TOOK THAT VACATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA A COUPLE YEARS AGO...
AIN'T NO EXCUSE. THEY MUST THINK THIS IS THE WILD WEST.
HELLO MRS G--POP SENDS HIS REGARDS.
NO HE DOESN'T, JUNIOR SCHNEIDER! YOUR FATHER WANTS ME TO SELL HIM MY LIFE'S WORK FOR 50¢ ON THE DOLLAR!
NOW MRS. G, WON'T YOU RECONSIDER POP'S OFFER? IT'S NOT GOING TO LAST FOREVER.
YOU HEARD HER, JUNIOR. BEAT IT!
KEEP YOUR YAP SHUT AND DON'T CALL ME JUNIOR.
WHY NOT, JUNIOR? AIN'T YOU JUST A CHIP OFF THE OLD BLOCKHEAD?
WHAP

WOOSH!
WHOOP!
STOP! STOP IT!
YOU SEE, MRS. G? MANY PEOPLE DON'T REALIZE HOW DANGEROUS THE FUNERAL BUSINESS IS.
NOW HOW ABOUT IT? WILL YOU RECONSIDER POP'S OFFER?
NO! NEVER! PEOPLE LIKE YOU HAVE NO BUSINESS IN THE BUSINESS!
OLIVER! OLIVER!
OHHH..
SUIT YOURSELF, MRS. G. COME ON, SHANKS.
WHAT NEXT?
NOW SHANKS, MY FOREIGN EXCHANGE STUDENT, I'M GOING TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A TRADITIONAL AMERICAN PASTTIME...

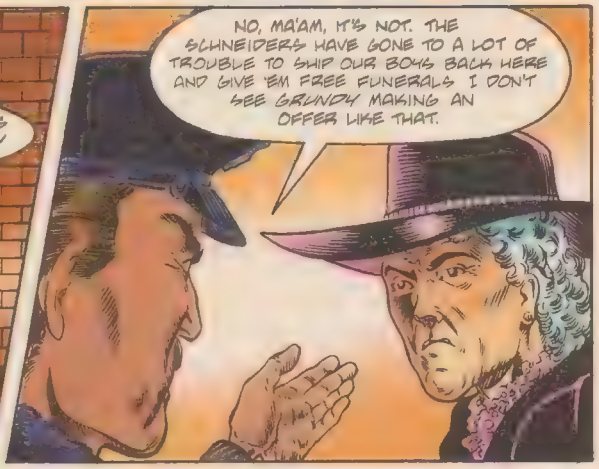
OKAH--THERE THEY GO. GRAB THAT CROWBAR AND CAN OF SPRAY PAINT FROM THE BACK...
...WE'RE GONNA TIP A FEW COFFINS!
THE AMERICAN FUNERAL INDUSTRY IS NOT AT ALL WHAT I EXPECTED.
BINGO! LET'S GO TO WORK
THERE ARE DEAD PEOPLE IN HERE
THERE ARE? GREAT!
STAND ASIDE-- LET AN ARTIST WORK.
MORNING.
OH, DEAR. I DO HOPE OLIVER GOT HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL ALL RIGHT.
Grundy FUNERAL HOME
EEEE

EEEEEE
CLASS OF '69

HOW SAY JUNIOR SCHNEIDER DID THIS?
HIM AND SOME HUGE ORIENTAL.' YOU CAN ASK MY NEPHEW, OLIVER.
FUNERAL H
I'M AFRAID WE CAN'T DO THAT, MRS GRUNDY...

...OLIVER IS STILL IN A COMA. DOC SAYS HE MIGHT NOT PULL OUT OF IT. WHAT'S MORE, JUNIOR SCHNEIDER'S GOT A PERFECT ALIBI FOR WHEN ALL THIS IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE.
BUT... THAT CAN'T BE--

YES, IT CAN. THIS LOOKS LIKE KIDS' WORK TO ME. I DON'T KNOW WHY YOU'D WANT TO DRAG THE SCHNEIDERS INTO IT, UNLESS YOU WERE LOOKING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE...
OFFICER, THAT'S OUTRAGEOUS!


NO, MA'AM, IT'S NOT. THE SCHNEIDERS HAVE GONE TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO SHIP OUR BOYS BACK HERE AND GIVE 'EM FREE FUNERALS I DON'T SEE GRUNDY MAKING AN OFFER LIKE THAT.

BADGER.
MISTER SYKES?
YEAH, YEAH. HIM TOO. WHAT DO YOU WANT?
MY NAME IS LEO FADIMAN. I HAVE A FARM IN BOX ELDER. I KNEW YOUR MOTHER--MY MILLIE'S IN THAT HOME.
SURE, I REMEMBER YOU. WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
MISTER SYKES, THEY'RE BURNING BODIES DOWN AT THE OLD KILN.
HUH?
THERE'S AN OLD KILN DOWN THE ROAD--THEY'RE BURNING HUMAN BODIES IN THERE...
I KNOW.
COME ON, MISTER FADIMAN. COULDN'T YOU BE MISTAKEN?
SON, I WAS WITH THE INFANTRY WHEN WE LIBERATED DACHAU IN 1945. I KNOW THAT SMELL!
HELLO, RILEY? YOU WANT TO TAKE A LITTLE RIDE UP NORTH?
MISTER FADIMAN SAID HE SAW A VALLEY FUNERAL HOME HEARSE PULL UP TO THE KILN LATE AT NIGHT...

VALLEY FUNERAL HOME
WHOA-- WHAT'RE A-- THE GENERALS DOING HERE?
WE'RE CLOSE TO THE NORTHERN GREAT LAKES AIR FORCE BASE.
EXCUSE ME, CAPTAIN. .S THERE A FUNERAL TODAY?
THERE'S A CEREMONY FOR SOME RETURNED MIAS. YOU'RE WELCOME TO ATTEND.
I WAS WITH THE 4TH INFANTRY D.VISION OUT OF SEATTLE. HOW COME THE CEREMONY'S BEING HELD HERE?
SCHNEIDER SENIOR'S A VETERAN-- A MIGHTY GOOD MAN. HE DID A LOT OF LEGWORK GETTING THE VIETS TO COOPERATE.
WE DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO SOME OF THESE BONES ARE... JUST NAMELESS SOLDIERS.
WE'D LIKE TO PAY OUR RESPECTS.
NOTHING STOPPING YOU, SOLDIER.

Warden **John Ostrander** and guest artist **Kelley Jones** put Jim Twilley through the perils of life in a pan-dimensional prison.

The lock-up begins in

grimJACK #73

On sale now from FIRST PUBLISHING

An eye for an eye!

OGAMI VERSUS THE YAGYU!

THE BATTLE YOU'VE BEEN WAITING FOR!

LONE WOLF AND CUB #35

COMING IN MAY FROM FIRST PUBLISHING

THIS AIN'T A BAD IDEA, MAN
HEY-- THERE'S THAT GUY.
EXCUSE ME...
CRASH
HOW DO YOU TELL THE JARS APART?
THERE ARE MARKINGS ON THE BOTTOM. EXCUSE ME. THIS AREA IS OFF-LIMITS
WHO'S THAT?
THAT'S THE GUY WHO DELIVERED MY MOTHER'S ASHES.
THERE'S SOMETHING FUNNY GOING ON...
COME ON-- LET'S GET IN THERE
MISTER SYKES-- IS THERE ANYTHING WE CAN DO FOR YOU?
WE'RE HERE TO ATTEND THE SERVICE FOR THE DEAD SOLDIERS.
IN OUR MAIN SALON, MISTER SYKES. THERE'S NOTHING BACK HERE BUT WORKROOMS, AND YOU DON'T WANT TO SEE WHAT'S IN THERE.

MY FRIENDS IT'S BEEN A LONG, HARD FIGHT THROUGH ENDLESS CORRIDORS OF BUREAUCRACY. THE JUNGLES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA... HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AIR MILES LOGGED... BUT TODAY MAKES IT ALL WORTHWHILE.
TODAY WE BROUGHT SOME OF OUR BOYS HOME...
AMEN TO THAT
A LOT OF PEOPLE HELPED-- SOME OF THEM USED TO BE OUR ENEMIES. TODAY THEY'RE OUR FRIENDS. TOMORROW THEY MAY BE OUR ENEMIES AGAIN...
...THE PRICE OF LIBERTY IS ETERNAL VIGILANCE.
REMEMBER--THERE WILL BE BEER AND BRATS AFTER THE SERVICE IN THE PARK ACROSS THE STREET.
DOESN'T THIS STRIKE YOU AS A LITTLE WEIRD?
IN WHAT WAY?
NOW I'D LIKE TO TURN THE PODIUM OVER TO THE REVEREND CHARLES BORGWARDT.
HE'S GOT A REVEREND, A CATHOLIC FATHER, A RABBI, AND A NEW AGE CRYSTAL PHILOSOPHER...
...HE'S RUNNING THIS MEMORIAL LIKE A CELEBRITY ROAST.
SO WHAT? HE BROUGHT 'EM BACK, DIDN'T HE?
I GUESS...
COME ON--LET'S GO SEE MISTER FADIMAN
AREN'T WE GONNA STAY FOR BEER AND BRATS?

I WAS SORRY TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR MOTHER, NORBERT. SHE WAS A NICE LADY.
THANKS, MISTER FADIMAN. NOW WHAT ABOUT THESE BODIES BEING BURNED?
IT'S COMIN' FROM THAT OLD CERAMICS FACTORY UP THE ROAD... FIRST NOTICED IT LAST FALL, RIGHT AFTER YOUNG SCHNEIDER COME BACK AN JOINED HIS DADDY.
WHAT ABOUT JUNIOR? WHERE WAS HE BEFORE?
HE GOT A TRY-OUT WITH THE CHICAGO BEARS... HE WAS ON WAIVERS FOR A FEW YEARS... JUNIOR WAS QUITE THE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL STAR.
BUT HE HAD AN ATTITUDE PROBLEM.
WHAT DO YOU THINK THEY'RE DOING IN THERE?
I KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING. THEY'RE BURNING BODIES! I 'SPECK THEY BURNED YOUR MOTHER'S BODY IN THAT THERE KILN.
HELLO, DAISY? LISTEN.. I WANT YOU TO HAVE THE CONTENTS OF MY MOTHER'S URN ANALYZED...
SHOOT, MAN. ASHES ARE ASHES.

MY MOM HAD A PIN IN HER HIP.
I DIDN'T HEAR ANY RATTLE WHEN I SHOOK THAT JAR.
YESSIR, THERE'S SOMETHING SINISTER GOIN' ON DOWN TO THE OLD KILN.
YOU HELPED LIBERATE DACHAU?
I'LL NEVER FORGET IT. IT MADE ME WANT TO KILL EVERY GERMAN I SAW.
SCHNEIDER... THAT'S GERMAN, ISN'T IT?
NEO-NAZIS? MY GUT SAYS THAT AIN'T IT.
MISTER THORP'S RIGHT. THING ABOUT JUNIOR IS, HE'S GREEDY. HE GOT CAUGHT TAKIN' MONEY FROM HIS COLLEGE COACH... I HEARD HE HAD SOME MIGHTY EXPENSIVE HABITS DOWN TO CHICAGO.
LIKE WHAT?
LADS, GIRLS, GAMBLING, DRUGS-- EVERY WAY YOU CAN SPEND MONEY AND NOT HAVE NOTHIN' TO SHOW FOR IT.
RING RING
MOM, DAISY. WHAT'D YOU LEARN?
THE ASHES IN YOUR MOTHER'S URN... THEY'RE FROM A CHARCOAL GRILL.
WHAT?!
SOME ASHES FROM A BACKYARD GRILL USED TO COOK BRATWURSTS. THERE'S BEEN A HORRIBLE MISTAKE.
I'LL SAY... AND JUNIOR SCHNEIDER MADE IT!

HEY SHANKS! (Ungh!) GIVE ME A HAND...WE CAN GET TWO MORE BODIES IN HERE.
CLARK CERAMICS
Ungh! THESE DAMN MIA'S ARE STILL A HANDFUL, EVEN AFTER WE CLEANED OUT 250 POUNDS OF HEROIN.
STEP ASIDE.
Hhhhhhh--
SHOOMP

HOLD ON, MAN--DON'T DO NOTHIN'...
BEEYAGH!
CRA
SH!

THWOK!
I PAID $750 FOR THE DELUXE FUNERAL, AND YOU STUFFED MY MOM IN THAT KILN LIKE CORDWOOD!
WHAM!
AND I HATE THE GODDAMN BEARS, TOO!
KRAK

CEASE.
WHO'RE YOU? THE CHINESE CONNECTION?
I AM A PRIEST OF THE TEMPLE OF THE BUDDHA'S PALM, A HUMBLE SEEKER ON THE PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT.
YOU MAY CALL ME SHANKS.
SHANKS, YOU'RE HOOKED UP WITH THE WRONG CROWD. I MAY HAVE TO PUNCH YOU OUT ON GENERAL PRINCIPLES.
I HAVE HEARD OF YOU, BADGER. THEY SAY YOU ARE A GREAT MASTER OF GUNG FU... CAN YOU DEFEAT MY BUDDHA'S PALM?
I CAN KNOCK YOU INTO THE MIDDLE OF NEXT WEEK.

NEXT: "THE WORMS CRAWL IN, THE WORMS CRAWL OUT..."

Yo Larry:

This is my first letter to the *Badger*. I picked up issue 60 after seeing the ad in the *Comic Buyer's Guide* about Steven Butler coming on the book. I enjoyed Steven Butler's art a lot, especially the fight scenes. Steven and Mike seem to work quite well together, and I hope he stays on this book for a long time because if he does, I'll keep buying it.

Mike Baron and Steven Butler are the new legends behind the *Badger*. Keep up the excellent work.

Peter Frisco
26 Old Park Lane
Richmond Hill, Toronto
Canada L4B 2L4

Of course we will, Peter.

Dear Larry,

A few random notes and quotes circa *Badger* #59 and #60.

Well, all I can say about #59 was that I was wrong and now I've got egg all over my face. The Pander Brothers came through with a wonderful art job on this story. I was extremely surprised by the wonderfully wacky visuals; they complemented the avant-garde tale of New York perfectly! While Arnold and Jacob aren't my favorite *Badger* tandem, they're certainly welcome should they decide to return. As for the story, it was nearly as good as #58.

RE: *Badger* #60. *Awright!* The witty, kick-ass Badger I grew up with is back! (Okay, I didn't grow up with him, but it sure seems like it — Norbert and company have grown tremendously in just over two years.) Steven Butler is incredible! What a cover! What terrific inside art! What a tight, fast-paced story he tells! What the hell am I doing with the surplus of exclamation points?!

Seriously (at least as serious as it can get around our favorite Syke-o), Mike Baron has finally brought the old Badger's personality back. He's lean, he's mean, he's a fightin' machine, but, best of all, he's funny again! First, may I compliment Mike on the nutty beauty of the subject. The Chisums ("...here to buy jism") are the kind of off-the-wall adversaries we (and the Badge) need. The scissors, paper, and stone motif is probably the best gag this book has ever had (though we still call it *rock*, scissors, and paper around these parts).

Badger and his RC racer were a riot, as were the fictitious sponsors he rattled off (United Arab Emirates, indeed!). I love the formal, yet cruel, banter between Badge and Ham; it makes for better character conflict. Nice bull, that King W.I. Kamehameha. I liked Mavis 100% better in this issue, too. Jademan Comics — oh, please!

As for news, *Badger Bedlam*, Spyder as a fill-in artist, and no reprints. Yes, that makes you three-for-three on the information. Not that I don't want reprints, mind you, it's just that I could do without the additional expense.

I concur, Bob; Baron and Butler are going to bring this comic to new heights. They've succeeded beyond my wildest expectations with this bold new step. *Badger* #60: A New Beginning. Until next time, America...

Thanks for listening,
Shane Demmitt
Route 2, Box 369
Williamsport, MD 21795

Yow! A man after my own heart.

Our mad, madcap, martial artist is going to engage in numerous escapades running from the serious (like this issue and next) to the downright silly — like our special Halloween issue.

We now have plans to expand on Badger's past, so you can bet a new era is about to come upon us.

Hey Bob—

Steven Butler's debut visuals from *Badger* #60 were quite nice, but he's not giving us the most sensational Badger ever. Ron Lim still holds that honor.

And Mike Baron's plug for Jademan Comics was truly hilarious. [*What plug? — BG*]

But the Chisum brothers are totally disgusting. Keep 'em the hell away from me!! And tell Norbert not to bend over around them once he catches up to them.

Brrrrr!!!!!

Uncle Elvis
17650 Dawson Road
Dawson Springs, KY 42408

The Chisums have nothing but nice things to say about you, Unc.

Dear Badger People,

The reason *Grimjack* may receive more mail then *Badger* is that John Ostrander gives away copies of *Grimjack* at conventions and asks people to write to him at First letting him know what they thought of the book. This may not be a bad idea for Mike Baron to try. This way you could increase *Badger's* mail response and readership, and *Badger* could be exposed to readers who don't buy it because they think Badger is just a Wolverine imitation. [*Badger hasn't done a wolverine imitation in years. — BG*]

I think you should go back to the short back-up stories in the book. The main feature was better when it was shorter and I like to see the different renditions of Badger in the short feature.

Keep Steven Butler on *Badger* as long as possible. Badger looks demonic on the cover of issue 60. Could it possibly be made into a poster? I have a copy of it that is featured on First's monthly newsletter hanging on my bedroom wall but I would really like a larger version of it.

"Remember, people, just because we have a kinder, gentler nation doesn't mean we can't let Badger have some fun every now and then."

I wrote an essay about Badger for one of my English classes at Ball State. My thesis statement was that Badger isn't really crazy, but the world in which he lives is. My instructor told me that this may not be a good idea since it states in the introduction to each book that Badger is crazy. But I went ahead and did it anyway. I must have convinced her that my idea had some merit since I got a "B" on the essay.

I also wrote that *Badger* contains some of the best social commentary in the world today and that comics were literature. I have not received any comment on this one yet. I don't expect it to be favorable, though, because I was making fun of the class, and the book we use in the class. [*Always a great way to impress one's instructors. — BG*]

Could you possibly someday have a *Badger* story take place in central Indiana? There is a lot for Badger to do here. I know a certain bureaucratic university dean he could visit in Muncie. Or he could visit Garfield. If nothing else, Badger could help the farmers who are losing their farms.

Forget the Badger/Wolverine team-up someone suggested a few issues back. Badger has way too much class to be seen with Wolverine. Animal Man would be the perfect person for Badger to encounter. Gnort would not be a bad match either. [*Who are these characters that everyone keeps mentioning. Wolverine? Gnort? Animal Man? They sound like blatant hackneyed ripoffs of our well-loved, intricately crafted Badger. Actually Gnort doesn't. That sounds more like ... well, y'know.— BG*]

Keep up the good work and, no matter what you do, I'll still read *Badger.*

Shawn Carey
1502 E. 10th St.
Anderson, IN 46012

I'm glad you will keep buying Badger *no matter what, because after this two-parter, we start a special six-part Pierre storyline, in which our hero becomes a crazed mass-murderer who wears this really cool all-black costume. It's sort of an experiment to see if we can reposition* Badger *in the marketplace to reflect current comic trends.*

Dear Larry,

What's with Badger in #60? There was a time when he would have beaten the $#!t out of anyone with the audacity to call himself Curly. He wouldn't have had to wait for him to KO King Wilhelm. Remember, people, just because we have a kinder, gentler nation doesn't mean we can't let Badger have some fun every now and then. [*It is the calming and spiritually fulfilling presence of his wife, Mavis, that has kept ol' Badge in check. — BG*]

By the way, are you trying to tell me that Badger doesn't know Folding Cotton Kung Fu? Come on! Badger is *the* master of abstruse martial arts. Everybody knows that! [*Honorable wife is versed in many skills from the mysterious Orient, that Badger is only beginning to learn about. — BG*]

Also, how can Badger, a self-proclaimed savior of the wild kingdom, condone the sacrifice of a mouse to Fuzzbuster? He could have used a cookie instead. (Well, I guess Badger does get a bit overprotective about his cookies.) He also tries to rationalize the sacrifice of a couple of cats! What's next? Will the Badger's sense of justice deteriorate to the point where he will let all the jaywalkers and the indifferent teenaged fast-food clerks (wait a second! That's a great name for a comic book: *Indifferent Teenaged Fast-Food Clerks*) get off scot free?

P.S. One vote for Mel Gibson and Danny Devito to portray Badger and Ham in the forthcoming controversial movie, "The Badger: Criminal, Savior, or the Sign of a Very Sick Mind?"

Steven M. Kard
Flushing, NY

What a Kard, this guy.

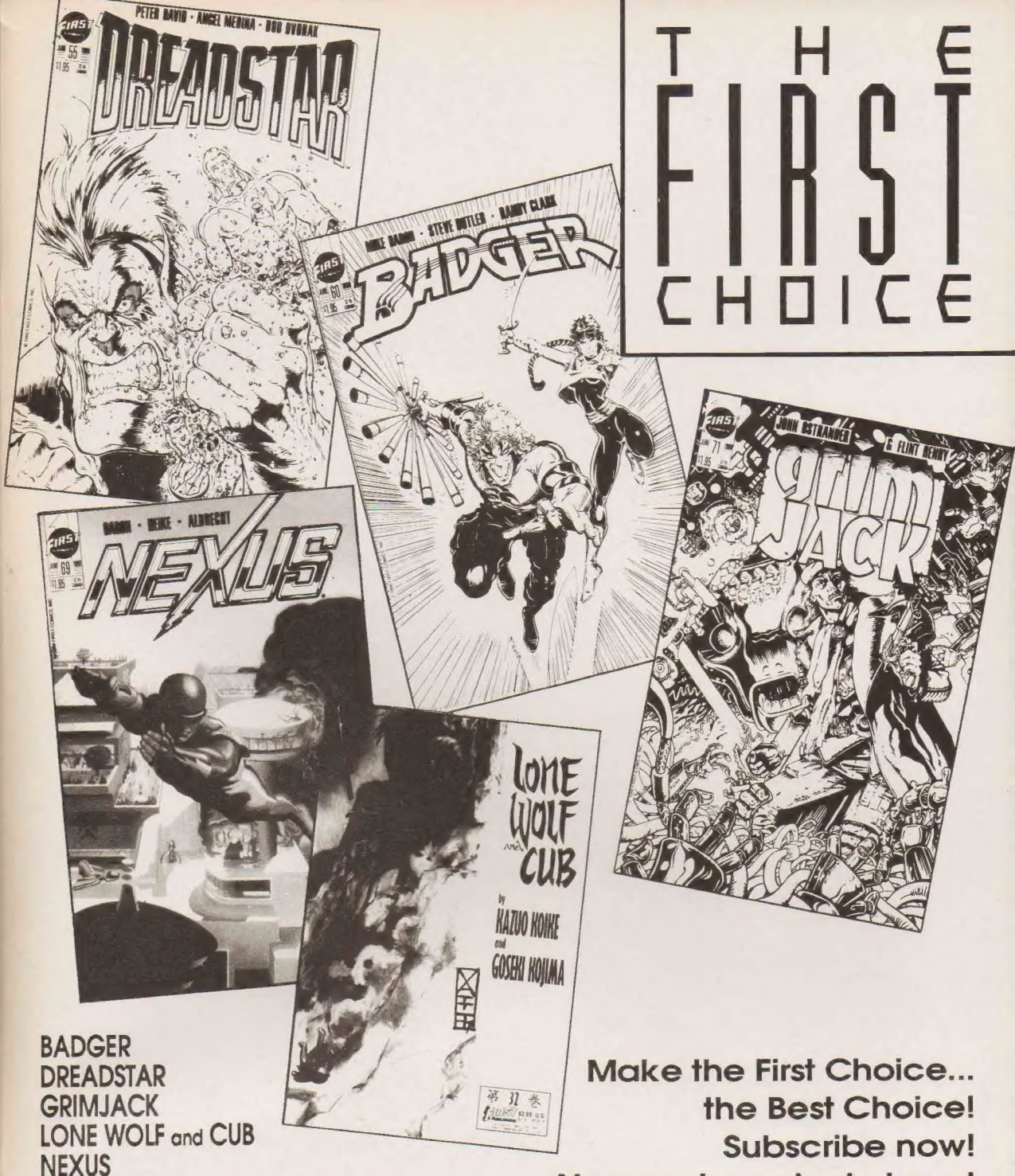
There is really no contradiction in the Badger's actions, Steven. Think about it.

By the way, If you thought the actions of the Schneiders were particularly brutal and outrageous, just know that this two-issue storyline is based on a real incident in California. Except for the addition of the drug-running, the family in California did much worse than we depict here. Truth is nastier than fiction. Eh?

— Bob Garcia

NEXT ISSUE: Matters come to a head when Norbert Sykes confronts the Schneider family in "The Worms Crawl In, The Worms Crawl Out." By **Mike Baron**, **Steven Butler**, and **Randy Clark.**

THE FIRST CHOICE



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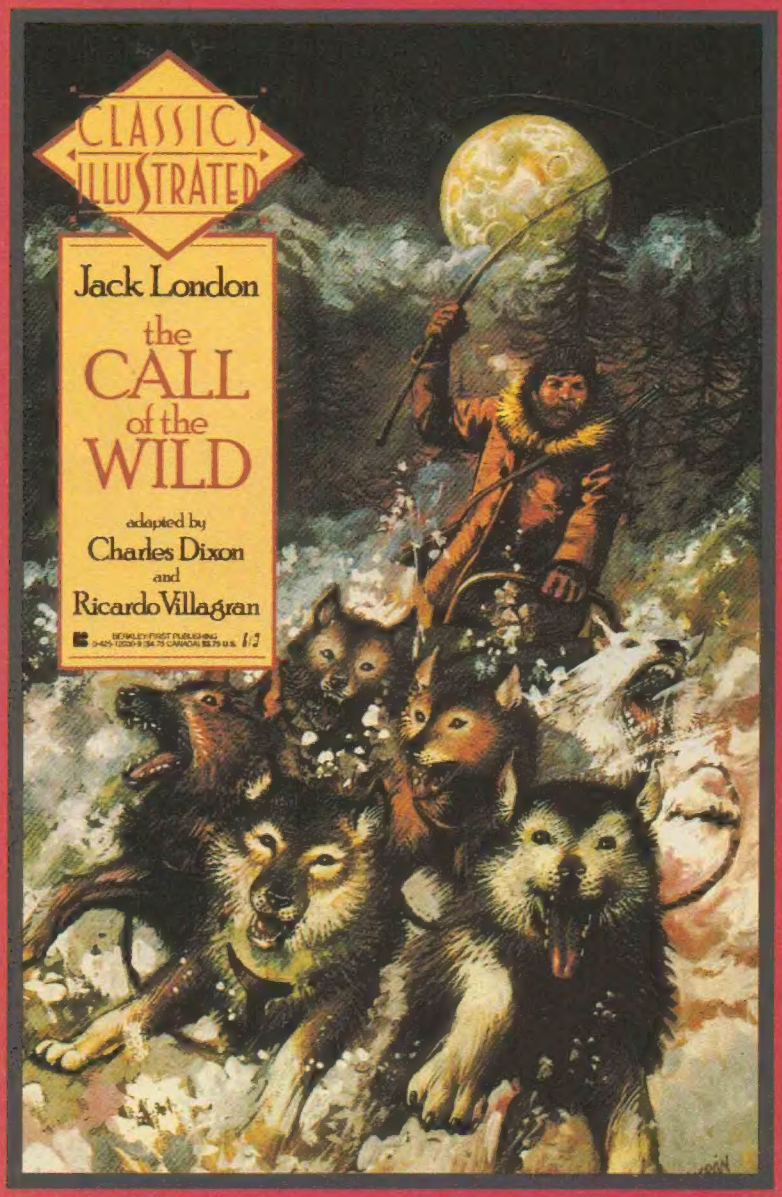

Jack London
the CALL of the WILD

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